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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 MANAMA 001365

SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA/ARPI, S/CT, DS
LONDON FOR E GOLDRICH

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [ASEC](#) [ETRD](#) [ECON](#) [BA](#)

SUBJECT: CABINET AFFAIRS MINISTER MUTAWWA DELIVERS DRAFT
COUNTER-TERRORISM LAW, DISCUSSES SECURITY SITUATION IN
AMBASSADOR'S INTRODUCTORY CALL

Classified by Ambassador William T. Monroe for reasons 1.4
(b) and (d)

Summary

1. (S) The Ambassador paid an introductory call September 1 on Minister of Cabinet Affairs Mohammed bin Ibrahim Al Mutawwa and discussed Bahrain's draft counter-terrorism law, bilateral counter-terrorism cooperation and the six terrorism suspects, U.S. influence in the Arab world, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, democracy, and bilateral economic ties. Al Mutawwa passed the Ambassador a copy of Bahrain's draft counter-terrorism law, which the Cabinet has approved and will deliver to parliament in early October when the next session begins. The Ambassador urged the GOB to keep the six suspects in prison while the prosecution builds a case against them. He said that he and Washington officials had serious concerns about the suspects, and the U.S. reaction would be very strong if they were released. Al Mutawwa said that the GOB needed hard evidence against the six to keep them in custody and requested our assistance in collecting evidence. He told the Ambassador that he would urge the Prime Minister to meet with the Ambassador soon to discuss this issue. End Summary.

Draft CT Law Delivered

2. (C) Minister of Cabinet Affairs Mohammed bin Ibrahim Al Mutawwa September 1 welcomed the Ambassador to Bahrain and assured him that he would find Bahrainis at all levels of society to be very open with him. He commented on the strength of our bilateral relations and said the two countries were poised to take major steps, particularly signing the U.S.-Bahrain Free Trade Agreement (FTA). In the context of enhancing bilateral cooperation, Al Mutawwa passed the Ambassador a copy of the draft counter-terrorism law in Arabic. He said that the Cabinet had approved the text of the law and that the draft would be delivered to parliament at the opening of the next session, in early October. He hoped it would become law by the end of the year. Al Mutawwa said that the Cabinet had not yet decided whether to present the law as an amendment to the existing criminal code or as new legislation. In any case, the substance would be the same. The drafters used a recent UK counter-terrorism law as the basis for the Bahraini draft. (Note: Embassy is reviewing the draft and developing an executive summary. Embassy will forward full Arabic text to NEA/ARPI. End Note.)

Serious Concerns About Terrorism Suspects

3. (S) The Ambassador stated that he had spent the summer in Washington working on security-related issues with a focus on the case of the six terrorism suspects. He said that U.S.-Bahrain cooperation has been excellent, and the U.S. is pleased with Bahrain's steps related to the CT draft law and the development of a CT Operations Center. He noted that he had been able to point to the many positive measures the GOB had taken when arguing to lift the travel warning and Embassy authorized departure, and to keep the DOD Bahrain School open. He indicated, however, that he was concerned about the status of the six detainees. He had learned that the Bahraini judge had decided to extend their detention for just 15 days rather than 45 days, as the prosecutor had requested. The Ambassador emphasized that they must remain in prison while prosecutors and investigators built a case against them. The Ambassador stated that he and Washington officials had serious concerns about the suspects, and the U.S. reaction would be very strong if they were released.

4. (C) The Minister said that security was Bahrain's top priority. The GOB understands that terrorists can attack anywhere, and life means nothing to them. He is pleased that the GOB and USG are working together on counter-terrorism and this cooperation will lead to real results.

GOB Needs Additional Evidence Against Suspects

15. (S) Regarding the six suspects, Al Mutawwa said that hard evidence against them would improve the case to keep them in custody. The court might rule that there was not enough evidence against them currently to keep them in prison. However, as additional evidence came to light, the GOB could arrest them again. The Ambassador stressed the need for a thorough investigation, and to keep the suspects in prison while a case against them was being developed. The Minister said that he understood the Ambassador's message and promised to pass it to Prime Minister Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa. He also pledged to urge the PM to meet soon with the Ambassador.

16. (C) The Minister asked about the current situation in Saudi Arabia. The Ambassador responded that it remained worrisome. It was a good example of what could happen if a government does not get on top of the security situation early enough. He noted that bilateral cooperation was very good now. Al Mutawwa stated that in the case of Iraq, Bahrain shared and believed in the U.S. aim of stability.

U.S. Assistance on Democracy and Economy

17. (C) The Ambassador said that Bahrain had taken many positive steps on democracy and economy. Al Mutawwa thanked the Ambassador for U.S. assistance in these areas. He said that Bahrain wanted to build a strong democratic base and was committed to dialogue with the opposition to achieve this. Regarding the FTA, the Minister said that the GOB was focused on the benefits the Bahraini people can derive from the agreement. The Ambassador pledged to work with the Bahraini government and private sector to deepen trade and investment ties between the two countries.

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